WITHIN THE LAW

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CHAPTER X.

Garson's Noiseless Gun.

SOMETHING of what was in his mind was revealed in Garson's first speech after Griggs' going.

"That's a mighty big stake he's playing for."

"And a big chance he's taking!" Mary retorted. "No, Joe, we don't want any of that. We'll play a game that's safe and sure."

The words recalled to the forger weird forebodings that had been troubling him throughout the day.

"It's sure enough," he stated, "but is it safe?"

"What do you mean?"

Garson walked to and fro nervously as he answered.

"S'pose the bulls get tired of you

Inspector Burke.

putting it over on 'em and try some rough work?"

"Don't worry, Joe. I know a way to stop it."

"Well, so far as that goes, so do I," the forger said, with significant emphasis.

"Just what do you mean by that?" Mary demanded, suspiciously.

"For rough work," he said, "I have this." He took a magazine pistol from his pocket. It was of an odd shape, with a barrel longer than usual and a bellshaped contrivance attached to the muzzle.

"No, no, Joe," Mary cried. "None of that—ever!"

"Pooh!" The forger exclaimed. "Even if I used it, they would never get on to me. See this?" He pointed at the strange contrivance on the muzzle.

"What is it? I have never seen anything like that before."

"Of course you haven't. I'm the first man in the business to get one, and I'll bet on it. I keep up with the times." He was revealing that fundamental egotism which is the characteristic of all his kind. "That's one of the new Maxim silencers. With smokeless powder in the cartridges, and the silencer on, I can make a shot from my coat pocket, and you wouldn't even know it had been done. And I'm some shot, believe me."

"Impossible!" Mary ejaculated.

"No, it ain't. Here, wait, I'll show you."

"Good gracious, not here!" Mary exclaimed in alarm. "We would have the whole place down on us."

Garson chuckled.

"You just watch that dinky little vase at the table across the room there. 'Tain't very valuable, is it?"

"No," Mary answered.

In the same instant, while still her eyes were on the vase, it fell in a cascade of shivered glass to the table and floor. She had heard no sound, she saw no smoke. Perhaps, there had been a faintest clicking noise. She stared dumfounded for a few seconds, then turned her bewildered face toward Garson, who was grinning in high enjoyment.

"Neat little thing, ain't it?" the man asked, exultantly.

"Where did you get it?" Mary asked.

"In Boston, last week. And between you and me, Mary, it's the only model, and it sure is a corker."

That night in the back room of Blinkey's English Eddie and Garson sat with their heads close together over a table.

"A chance like this," Griggs was saying, "a chance that will make a fortune for all of us."

"It sounds good," Garson admitted, wistfully.

"Well," urged Griggs, "what do you say?"

"How would we split it?"

"Three ways would be right," Griggs answered. "One to me, one to you and one to be divided up among the others."

Garson brought his fist down on the table with a force that made the glasses jingle.

"You're on," he said, strongly.

"Fine!" Griggs declared, and the two men shook hands. "Now, I'll get"—

"Get nothing!" Garson interrupted. "I'll get my own men. Chicago Red is in town. So is Dacey, with perhaps a couple of others of the right sort. I'll get them and we'll turn the trick tomorrow night."

"That's the stuff," Griggs agreed, greatly pleased.

But a sudden shadow fell on the face of Garson. He bent closer to his companion and spoke with a fierce intensity that brooked no denial.

"She must never know."

Griggs nodded understandingly.

Mary had gone to her bedroom for a nap. She was not in the least surprised that Dick had not yet returned, though he had mentioned half an hour. At the best there were many things that might detain him—his father's absence from the office, difficulties in making arrangements for his projected honeymoon trip abroad—which would never occur—or the like. At the worst there was a chance of finding his father promptly, and of that father as promptly taking steps to prevent the son from ever again seeing the woman who had so indiscreetly married him.

Yet somehow Mary could not believe that her husband would yield to such paternal coercion. Rather, she was sure that he would prove loyal to her whom he loved through every trouble. At the thought a certain wistfulness pervaded her and a poignant regret that this particular man should have been the one chosen of fate to be entangled within her mesh of revenge. There throbbed in her a heart tormenting realization that there were in life possibilities infinitely more splendid than the joy of vengeance. She would not confess the truth even to her inmost soul, but the truth was there and set her atremble with vague fears.

She had slept, perhaps, a half hour when Fannie awakened her.

"It's a man named Burke," she explained as her mistress lay blinking. "And there's another man with him. They said they must see you."

By this time Mary was wide awake, for the name of Burke, the police inspector, was enough to startle her out of drowsiness.

She got up, slipped into a teagown, bathed her eyes in cologne, dressed her hair a little and went into the drawing room, where the two men had been waiting for something more than a quarter of an hour—to the violent indignation of both.

"Oh, here you are, at last!" the big, burly man cried as she entered.

"Yes, inspector," Mary replied pleasantly, as she advanced into the room. She gave a glance toward the other visitor, who was of a slenderer form, with a thin, keen face, and recognized him instantly as Demarest, who had taken part against her as the lawyer for the store at the time of her trial, and who was now district attorney. She went to the chair at the desk and seated herself in a leisurely fashion that increased the indignation of the fuming inspector. She did not ask her self invited guests to sit.

"To whom do I owe the pleasure of this visit, inspector?" she remarked coolly. It was noticeable that she said whom and not what, as if she understood perfectly that the influence of some person brought him.

"I have come to have a few quiet words with you," the inspector declared. Mary disregarded him, and turned to the other man.

"How do you do, Mr. Demarest?" she said evenly. "It's four years since we met, and they've made you district attorney since then. Allow me to congratulate you."

Demarest's keen face took on an expression of perplexity.

"I'm puzzled," he confessed. "There is something familiar, somehow, about you, and yet"—

"Can't you guess?" Mary questioned. "Search your memory, Mr. Demarest."

The face of the district attorney lightened.

"Why!" he exclaimed, "you are—it can't be—yes—you are the girl, you're the Mary Turner whom I—oh, I know you now."

"I'm the girl you mean, Mr. Demarest, but, for the rest, you don't know me—not at all!"

"Young woman," Burke said, peremptorily, "the Twentieth Century limited leaves Grand Central station at 4 o'clock. It arrives in Chicago at 8:55 tomorrow morning." He pulled a massive gold watch from his waistcont pocket, glanced at it, thrust it back, and concluded ponderously: "You will just about have time to catch that train."

"Working for the New York Central now?" Mary asked blandly.

"You'd better be packing your trunk," the inspector mumbled.

"But why? I'm not going away."

"On the Twentieth Century limited this afternoon," the inspector declared in a voice of growing wrath.

"Oh, dear, no!"

"I say yes!" The answer was a bellow. "I'm giving you your orders. You will either go to Chicago or you'll go up the river."

"If you can convict me. Pray, notice that little word 'if.'"

The district attorney interposed very suavely:

"I did once, I remember."

"But you can't do it again," Mary declared with an assurance that excited the astonishment of the police officials.

"How do you know he can't?" he blustered.

"Because if he could he would have had me in prison some time ago."

"Huh!" Burke exclaimed gruffly. "I've seen them go up pretty easy."

"The poor ones; not those that have money. I have money, plenty of money—now."

"Money you stole!" the inspector returned brutally.

"Oh, dear, no!" Mary cried with a fine show of virtuous indignation.

"What about the $30,000 you got on that partnership swindle? I s'pose you didn't steal that!"

"Certainly not," was the ready reply. "The man advertised for a partner in a business sure to bring big and safe returns. We formed a partnership with a capital of $60,000. We paid the money into the bank, and then at once I drew it out. It was legal for me to draw that money—wasn't it, Mr. Demarest?"

The district attorney admitted the truth of her contention.

"Well, anyhow," Burke shouted, "you may stay inside the law, but you've got to get outside the city. On the level, now, do you think you could get away with that young Gilder scheme you've been planning?"

"What young Gilder scheme?"

"Oh, I'm wise—I'm wise!" the inspector cried roughly. "The answer is, once for all, leave town this afternoon or you'll be in the Tombs in the morning."

"It can't be done, inspector."

Mary opened a drawer of the desk and took out the document obtained that morning from Harris and held it forth."

"What's this?" Burke stormed, but he took the paper.

Demarest looked over the inspector's shoulder, and his eyes grew larger as he read. When he was at an end of the reading he regarded the passive woman at the desk with a new respect.

"What's this?" Burke repeated helplessly. Mary was kind enough to make the document clear to him.

"It's a temporary restraining order from the supreme court instructing you to let me alone until you have legal proof that I have broken the law."

"But it can't be done," shouted Burke.

"You might ask Mr. Demarest," Mary suggested pleasantly, "as to whether or not it can be done. The gambling houses can do it and so keep on breaking the law. The race track men can do it and laugh at the law. The railroad can do it to restrain its employees from striking. So why shouldn't I get one too? You see, I have money. I can buy all the law I want. And there's nothing you can't do with the law if you have money enough. Ask Mr. Demarest. He knows."

"Can you beat that?" Burke rumbled. He regarded Mary with a stare of almost reverential wonder. "A crook appealing to the law!"

"Well, gentlemen, what are you going to do about it?"

"Miss Turner," the district attorney said, with an appearance of sincerity, "I'm going to appeal to your sense of fair play."

"That was killed four years ago."

But Demarest persisted. Influence had been brought to bear on him. It was for her own sake now that he urged her.

"Let young Gilder alone."

Mary laughed again.

"His father sent me away for three years—three years for something I didn't do. Well, he's got to pay for it."

By this time, Burke, a man of superior intelligence, as one must be to reach such a position of authority, had come to realize that here was a case not to be carried through by bluster-ing, by intimidation, by the rough ruses familiar to the force.

"Don't fool yourself, my girl," he said in his huge voice, which was now modulated to a degree that made

"Well, gentlemen, what are you going to do about it?"

it almost unfamiliar to himself. "You can't go through with this. There's always a weak link in the chain somewhere. It's up to me to find it, and I will."

"Now," she said, and there was respect in the glance she gave the stalwart man, "now you really sound dangerous."

Fannie appeared at the door.

"Mr. Edward Gilder wishes to see you, Miss Turner," she said. "Shall I show him in?"

"Oh, certainly," Mary answered, with an admirable pretense of indifference, while Burke glared at Demarest, and the district attorney appeared ill at ease.

CHAPTER XI.

Gilder Meets Bride.

THERE entered the erect, heavy figure of the man whom Mary had hated through the years. He stopped abruptly just within the room, gave a glance at the two men, then his eyes went to Mary, sitting at her desk, with her face lifted inquiringly. He did not pause to take in the beauty of that face, only its strength. He stared at her silently for a moment. Then he spoke, a little tremulous from anxiety.

"Are you the woman?" he said. There was something simple and primitive, something of dignity beyond the usual conventions, in his direct address.

Mary's acknowledgment was as plain as his own question.

"I am the woman. What do you want?"

"My son."

Mary guessed that his coming was altogether of his own volition, and not the result of his son's information, as at first she had supposed.

"Have you seen him recently?"

"No."

"Then, why did you come?"

"Because I intend to save my boy from a great folly. I am informed that he is infatuated with you, and Inspector Burke tells me—why—he tells me"— He paused, unable for a moment to continue from an excess of emotion.

Inspector Burke filled the halting sentence.

"I told you she had been an ex-convict."

"Yes," Gilder said, after he had regained his self control. He stared at her pleadingly. "Tell me, is this true?"

Here, then, was the moment for which she had longed through weary days, through weary years. Here was the man whom she hated, suppliant before her to know the truth. Her heart quickened. Truly, vengeance is sweet to one who has suffered unjustly.

"Is this true?" the man repeated, with something of horror in his voice.

"It is," Mary said quietly.

For a little, there was silence in the room. At last, Gilder spoke with the

"Are you the woman?"

sureness of a man of wealth, confident that money will salve any wound.

"How much?" he asked, baldly.

Mary smiled an inscrutable smile.

"Oh, I don't need money," she said, carelessly. "Inspector Burke will tell you how easy it is for me to get it."

"Do you want my son to learn what you are?" he said.

"Why not? I'm ready to tell him myself."

Then Gilder showed his true heart in which love for his boy was before all else.

"But I don't want him to know," he stammered. "Why, I've spared the boy all his life. If he really loves you—it will"—

At that moment, the son himself entered hurriedly. In his eagerness he saw no one save the woman he loved. At his entrance, Mary rose and moved backward a step involuntarily, in sheer surprise over his coming.

The young man went swiftly to her, while the other three men stood silent. Dick took Mary's hand in a warm clasp, pressed it tenderly.

"I didn't see father," he said happily, "but I left a note on his desk at the office."

Then, somehow, the surcharged atmosphere penetrated his consciousness, and he looked around, to see his father standing grimly opposite him. But there was no change in his expression beyond a more radiant smile.

"Hello, dad!" he cried, joyously. "Then you got my note?"

"No, Dick, I haven't had any note."

The young man spoke with simple pride.

"Dad we're married. Mary and I were married this morning."

Mary kept her eyes steadfast on the father. There was triumph in her gaze. This was the vengeance for which she had longed, for which she had plotted, the vengeance she had at last achieved. Here was her fruition, the period of her supremacy.

Gilder seemed dazed by the brief sentence.

"Say that again," he commanded.

"Dad, Mary and I were married this morning."

"I married your son this morning," Mary said in a matter of fact tone. "I married him. Do you quite understand, Mr. Gilder? I married him." In that insistence lay her ultimate compensation for untold misery. The father stood there wordless, unable to find speech against this calamity that had befallen him.

"Dad, Mary and I were married this morning."

"It's a frameup!" Burke roared. He glared at the young man. "Tell your father it ain't true. Why, do you know what she is? She's done time." He paused for an instant, then spoke in a voice that was brutally menacing. "And she'll do it again!"

The young man turned toward his bride. There was disbelief, hope, despair, in his face.

"It's a lie, Mary," he said. "Say it's a lie!" He seized her hand passionately.

"It is the truth," Mary said firmly. "I have served three years in prison."

There was a silence of a minute that was like years.

Dick turned his tortured face to his bride of a day. Then he spoke again, more beseechingly.

"Say there's a mistake."

Mary spoke with a simplicity that admitted no denial.

"It's all quite true."

The man who had so loved her, trusted her, stood trembling for a moment, tottered and sank into a chair.

The father looked at Mary with a reproach that was pathetic.

"See," he said, and his heavy voice was for once thin with passion—"see what you've done to my boy!"

"What is that compared to what you have done to me?"

"What have I done to you?" he questioned, uncomprehending.

"Do you remember what I said to you the day you had me sent away?"

"I don't remember you at all."

"Perhaps you remember Mary Turner, who was arrested four years ago for robbing your store, and perhaps you remember that she asked to speak to you before they took her to prison."

The heavy jowled man gave a start.

"Oh, you begin to remember! Yes! There was a girl who swore she was innocent—yes, she swore that she was innocent. And she would have got off—only you asked the judge to make an example of her."

"You are that girl?"

"I am that girl."

There was a little interval of silence. Then Mary spoke again remorselessly.

"You took away my good name: you smashed my life; you put me behind

"Say, there's a mistake."

the bars. You owe for all that. Well, I've begun to collect."

"And that is why you married my boy?"

"It is." Mary gave the answer coldly, convincingly.

Convincingly, save to one—her husband. Dick suddenly aroused and spoke with the violence of one sure.

"It is not!"

He stood up and went to Mary, and took her two hands in his, very gently, yet very firmly.

"Mary," he said softly, yet with a strength of conviction, "you married me because you love me."

"No," she said gravely, "no, I did not!"

"And you love me now!" he went on insistingly.

"No, no!" Mary's denial came like a cry for escape.

"You love me now!" There was a masterful quality in his declaration, which seemed to ignore her negation.

"I don't," she repeated bitterly.

"Look me in the face and say that."

There was a silence that seemed long, though it was measured in the passing of seconds. At last Mary, who had planned so long for this hour, gathered her forces and spoke valiantly. Her voice was low, but without any weakness of doubt.

"I do not love you."

"Just the same you are my wife, and I'm going to keep you and make you love me."

"She's a crook!" Burke said.

"I don't care what you've been!" Dick exclaimed. "From now on you'll go straight. You'll walk the straightest line a woman ever walked. You'll put all thoughts of vengeance out of your heart because I'll fill it with something bigger—I'm going to make you love me."

Burke spoke again:

"I tell you she's a crook."

Mary moved a little, and then turned her face toward Gilder.

"And, if I am, who made me one? You can't send a girl to prison and have her come out anything else."

Burke swung himself around in a movement of complete disgust.

"She didn't get her time for good behavior."

"And I'm proud of it!" came her instant retort. "Do you know what goes on there behind those stone walls? Do you, Mr. District Attorney, whose business it is to send girls there? Do you know what a girl is expected to do to get time off for good behavior? If you don't, ask the keepers.

"I served every minute of my time—every minute of it, three full, whole years. Do you wonder that I want to get even, that some one has got to pay? Four years ago, you took away my name—and gave me a number. Now, I've given up the number—and I've got your name."

(To Be Continued Next Saturday.)

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